



# *Celebrating Success*

**2014 Annual Report**

## **Mission Statement**

The Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP), through collaboration, provides all Nebraskans access and opportunities to better live, learn, and work.

In anticipation of the Assistive Technology Partnership's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on November 1, 2014, ATP presented certificates of appreciation and recognized the recipients as Tech Stars. Throughout the year advisory councils, disability organizations, state agencies and other partners were recipients of Tech Star certificates.



Leslie Novacek, ATP Director, presents a Tech Star certificate to Mark Schultz, Director, Nebraska VR. Mark was the director of ATP until 2008.

We are excited to share the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) 2014 Annual Report. ATP is celebrating the success of consumers using assistive technology, our partnerships, and new initiatives.

I am amazed and proud of all the outcomes achieved throughout our 25 year history by a small program with strong statewide partnerships. It is our pleasure to share our accomplishments and highlight the success of consumers.

Mark Schultz, the Director of ATP in 1999 said it best: "The outcome of the partnership is the availability of assistive technology services to individuals of all ages and types of disabilities. The new system integrates such diverse needs as education, health, employment, and housing into a comprehensive array of programs accessed through a single point of entry. This means when you contact ATP, you are tapping into the resources available through any of our partners. Much credit needs to be given to the state agencies and organizations who had the vision and courage to change the status quo in an effort to provide better services to persons with disabilities in Nebraska".

We look forward to continuing to make a difference in the lives of others, with a focus on areas of need in the current service system. We couldn't do it without the guidance of the ATP Advisory Council members and others.

Leslie G. Novacek  
Director  
Assistive Technology Partnership

Nancy Coffman, ATP Advisory Council Chair, became a Tech Star along with all the council members at their 2014 fall meeting.

Thank you for your support of the Assistive Technology Partnership. Your efforts, trust, and collaboration are greatly appreciated.

Over the past 25 years, ATP has joined with other organizations who work with people with disabilities, providing education, training, and technical assistance to help them maintain their independence and dignity. Many Nebraskans with disabilities, whether visible or invisible, temporary or permanent, have experienced the benefits of ATP and the services they provide.

As a member of the ATP Advisory Council, I have had the opportunity to participate in a variety of projects that have strengthened the agency's ability to serve its customers.

The array of projects and services are a true testimony to the flexibility and caring of ATP staff.

Congratulations to ATP and to all who have helped make the past 25 years better for all Nebraskans who experience a disability.

Nancy Coffman, CVRCB/NCLB  
Program Specialist/Technology Services  
Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired



## The Promise of the Partnership!

The Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) celebrated 25 years of serving Nebraska on November 1, 2014. Nebraska VR applied for a grant to establish the program in 1989. Nebraska was one of the first nine states funded by the Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988.

The original name of the program was the Assistive Technology Project. The name was changed to Partnership in 1998. The new name was symbolic of the tremendous changes that occurred in Nebraska's technology delivery system. Creating a partnership with agencies resulted in a unique collaboration. The seamless service across program lines resulted in less duplication and made it possible for individuals of all ages and disabilities to access success through a single point of entry.

ATP's focus has not changed. In this report you will read about 2014 and the on-going services provided for community living, employment, and education. What has changed is ATP's capacity to serve Nebraska. The program started with one office and a staff of five. Today 10 offices and a staff of 34 are helping success to add up.

ATP thanks everyone who been part of our 25 year history and we look forward to the continued success with technology!



1999:

A statewide Peer Support Network was one of the first strategies used to promote assistive technology. It was a vehicle to share information and resources with consumers. A display (photo above) at the state capitol by several volunteers included a demonstration of devices.

2014 Still involved today (in photo above):

Steve Walline (2<sup>nd</sup> left) a member of the ATP Advisory Council and Dixie Trevarthen (far right), ATP Education Technology Specialist



iCanConnect, the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program, is funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The pilot program started three years ago. ATP began administering the program for Nebraska in July of 2014.

Individuals who qualify for the program are able to access specialized equipment to make a phone call, send an email, or access the internet. Being able to communicate is essential for independence at home, school, work, and in the community.

Braille devices, software, signalers, iPads, and phones are eligible items. ATP Technology Specialists assess what will best solution for the consumers, using demonstration items on ATP's online equipment listing (at4all.com). Spending time with equipment ensures it is the right solution before purchase. Ten consumers began the process of identifying solutions during the first three months of the program.

## Community Living

Nebraska Health and Human Services (HHS) Aged and Disabled Home and Community-Based Medicaid Waiver expanded its services in 1998. Assistive technology and home modifications were included in this expansion to help the elderly and individuals with disabilities to continue to live in their homes.

The timing was perfect. The HHS expansion was at the same time the partnership was forming. Joining the partnership gave service coordinators the ability to make referrals to ATP after eligibility had been determined. One of the Solutions on Site vans was available for Technology Specialists to conduct on site assessments, design plans, obtain quotes, and oversee projects (ramps, handrails, door widening, etc.) until completion. When devices are needed they coordinate the ordering and installing of these items (vehicle hand controls, adaptive silverware, etc.).

In 1992, the Request for Coordinated Services and Device Form was developed to assist consumers to identify funding and eliminate the need to complete an application for each funding source. The form, now known as the Service and Device Application (S & D), continues to expedite the funding process. In 2014, requests were received from 370 consumers and referrals made to 13 cooperating agencies and 20 out-of-state programs. More than half of the requests were for home modifications.



1999:

Aluminum modular ramps were a solution often used for access in rural homes

Referrals completed or in process: 316

2014:

Platform lifts are an alternative to ramps when space is limited. They are easy to relocate when it is longer needed or someone moves. (see photo below)

Projects Authorized: 501

### 501 projects authorized in 2014

Average project cost \$3,870

46% of the projects (229) were authorized for the adult population age 19-64

|                             |              |   |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---|
| Primary source of funding   | \$ 1,647,785 | Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Home and Community-Based Waiver Services for Aged Persons or Adults or Children with Disabilities |
| Additional amount leveraged | \$ 291,547   | Co-funding for projects (needed when cost of project exceeds program caps)  |

**Total Authorized**

**\$1,939,332**



A 78 year old consumer in Crete experiences coronary artery disease. He and his wife use scooters and are unable to drive. They utilize the Saline County bus for transportation to medical appointments and shopping.

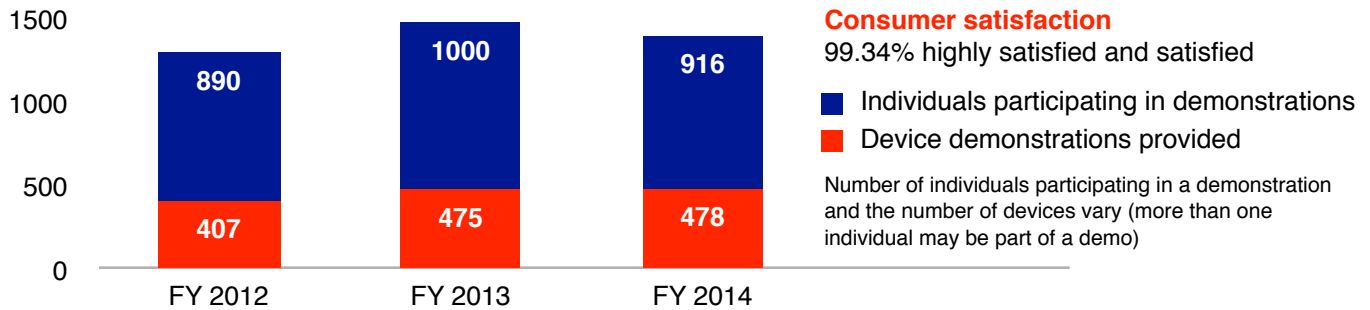
The existing ramp (left photo) had deteriorated and is no longer safe. The ramp is steep because it could not extend past the lot line. A solution would be a switchback ramp, however, it is hard to maneuver.

A vertical platform lift provides safe access and makes it possible for the couple to remain independent in their home.

## Device Demonstration Activities

**Device Demonstrations** compare the features and benefits of a particular assistive technology device or category of devices for individuals or small group. Demonstrations support an informed decision before committing to a purchase that may be costly and not the right fit.

Equipment demonstrations are conducted in a demonstration center (shown in photo below) and equipment can be delivered by Technology Specialists to explore the possibilities at home, school, or work.



| Type of AT demonstrations                   |            |
|---|------------|
| Computers                                   | 254        |
| Daily living                                | 31         |
| Environmental/Vehicle adaptations           | 6          |
| Mobility, seating, and positioning          | 55         |
| Learning/cognition                          | 67         |
| Speech communication                        | 17         |
| Vision/hearing                              | 48         |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>478</b> |
| Individuals participating in demonstrations |            |
| Individuals with disabilities               | 428        |
| Family members                              | 106        |
| Representatives of:                         |            |
| • Education                                 | 278        |
| • Employment                                | 46         |
| • Allied health and rehabilitation          | 39         |
| • Community living                          | 6          |
| • Technology                                | 13         |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>916</b> |



Kunal was referred to ATP by Nebraska VR. Kunal was having difficulty eating due to a nervous system disorder. During a visit to a demonstration center he experimented with several options and none of them met his needs. ATP contacted a vendor about a new device on the market that senses tremors and stabilizes itself to filter out unintended motion. The vendor agreed to send a sample for the consumer to try before buying.

Kunal discovered that the smart spoon (Liftware Spoon) had the features he was looking for. The spoon is portable (size of an electric toothbrush), quiet, and inconspicuous.

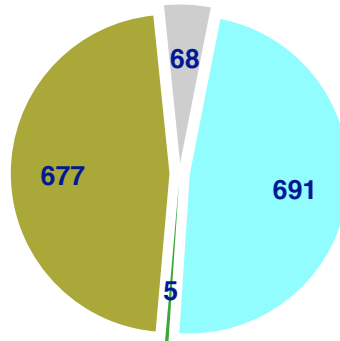
Kunal borrowed the device to try it at home for a month and was ready to take the next step and get his own smart spoon. During the visit, he also tried a button hook shown in photo above. Both were purchased by Nebraska VR and are helping him to get ready for work each morning.



## Device Loan Activities

**Short term loans** enable individuals or entities to borrow and “try-out” devices. A short term device loan is not a permanent reassignment, instead it enables individuals to have direct access to devices, often in the environment where they will be used.

| Individuals Participating | Devices Loaned |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| FY 2012 1,417             | 2,236          |
| FY 2013 1,381             | 2,316          |
| FY 2014 1,441             | 2,620          |
| <b>Total 4,239</b>        | <b>7,172</b>   |



### Purpose of Loans (1,441)

- Assists in decision making (691)
- Conduct training, self-education (5)
- Short term accommodation (677)
- Serves as a loaner during device repair or while waiting for funding (68)

### *Celebrating Hannah's Success!*



Hannah borrowed a UbiDuo from the ATP loan pool to try it at a Lincoln hospital during her Project Search\* internship. Hannah experiences cerebral palsy and needed a solution to help her communicate.

The UbiDuo recommended by ATP helps her to communicate face to face with supervisors, staff, and the public. The device provides simultaneous real-time communication and the split screen allows both persons to see what the other is saying without having to wait until they finish. Hannah was able to move the UbiDuo around from the front desk to other areas of the hospital.

The hospital recognized how the equipment could be used in other areas and purchased a UbiDuo to improve communication with patients who are deaf and hard of hearing. It will also be beneficial for patients who are unable to communicate due to a medical condition.

\* Project Search, a high school transition program, is a unique one year school to work program provided by Nebraska VR. The program is conducted at worksites in Omaha, Norfolk, Lincoln, York, Columbus, Kearney, Hastings, Grand Island, Valley, and North Platte.

ATP Technology Specialists receive referrals from Nebraska VR to assess the skills of students and identify areas where assistive technology could be beneficial in their job related tasks. The ATP Technology Specialists are available throughout the internships when a student role and responsibilities may change. Using assistive technology gives students confidence and helps them take the next step to success by securing a job after high school graduation.

## Device Reutilization Activities

**Reutilization** is the transferring of a used device from someone who no longer needs it to someone who does.

Device reutilization falls into 3 activity categories

|   | FY           | # of devices | Cost savings for consumers |
|---|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| <b>1. Exchange</b><br>Want-ads listed on at4all.com<br>(Devices can be purchased or obtained at no cost from the current owner) | 2012         | 12           | \$18,750                   |
|   | 2013         | 3            | \$3,400                    |
|   | 2014         | 7            | \$3,046                    |
|   | <b>Total</b> | <b>22</b>    | <b>\$25,196</b>            |
| <b>2. Reassignment</b><br>Gently used devices sanitized and permanently reassigned at no cost to individuals                    | 2012         | 334          | \$91,812                   |
|   | 2013         | 221          | \$98,648                   |
|   | 2014         | 283          | \$83,130                   |
|   | <b>Total</b> | <b>838</b>   | <b>\$272,590</b>           |
| <b>3. Open-ended loans</b><br>Devices borrowed for a long-term basis (keeping as long as needed)                                | 2012         | 30           | \$20,869                   |
|   | 2013         | 32           | \$20,232                   |
|   | 2014         | 45           | \$36,784                   |
|   | <b>Total</b> | <b>107</b>   | <b>\$77,885</b>            |
| <b>3 Year Total</b>   |              | <b>967</b>   | <b>\$375,671</b>           |

### The ReUse Network

During 2014, two work groups developed strategies to build the capacity for AT reuse in Nebraska.

One group focused on issues related to refurbishment of used equipment. The other focused on marketing and outreach. Both groups worked to raise awareness of the need to reuse AT, as well as the benefits. A marketing flyer was developed and the network was given a name: ReRUN.



Additional partners were identified and the network has grown as smaller regional groups began to develop.

Work group members began developing a ReRUN Best Practices manual, as well as making plans for a reuse summit in 2015.



*Celebrating ReUse!*



Project Homeless Connect Lincoln was held October 1, 2014. Individuals who are homeless are able to access a wide variety of immediate, on-site services and support for unmet needs.

ATP's exhibit included devices for reuse. ATP staff were able to reassign six items, including a set of grips for writing. The recipient's daughter was having difficulty grasping items due to Cerebral Palsy. The low tech grips will provide independence to write and perform activities of daily living (eating, brushing teeth).

Sock aids and a dressing stick were redistributed to a veteran who could not afford to purchase the items. A pediatric walker (see photo) was reassigned to a woman with Multiple Sclerosis who needed a smaller piece of equipment.



## Employment

Since 1998, ATP has partnered with Nebraska VR to help individuals with disabilities at work. The initial partnership SOS (Solutions on Site) jump started the availability of on-site statewide assessments, information and referral, a lending library of devices, and funding coordination.

Vans equipped with adaptive technology traveled to job sites to demonstrate adapted tools, keyboards, and phones. The project was also made possible with support from the Elks of Nebraska. Technical assistance was provided to 117 consumers the first year. During 2014, consumer requests were over 500 (some clients may have more than one request).



1998:

Solutions on Site (SOS) 8 Technology Specialists, 2 vans and 1 truck provided on-site assistance technical assistance

2014: Three of the 8 Technology Specialists in photo above continue to work at ATP: Lisa Oberg, (4<sup>th</sup> right), David Altman (3<sup>rd</sup> right) and Peg Hansen (2<sup>nd</sup> right)

- Hearing/Vision (29)
- Mobility Device (17)
- Aids to Daily Living/Durable Medical Equipment (27)
- Cognitive Aids, My Bionic Brain (149)
- Computer Hardware/Software (30)
- Home Modifications (bathrooms, entrances, etc.) (37)
- Other Information (12)
- Vehicle Modifications (58)
- Ergonomics (23)
- Worksite AT (66)
- Communication (15)
- Prosthesis/Orthosis (8)

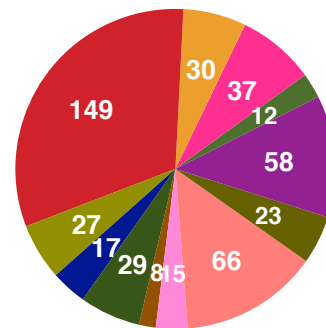
### 533 Service Request Types 2014

### Amount Authorized 2014

\$822,159 Title 1

\$ 52, 824 Leveraged from other sources

**\$874, 984 Total**



The scope of services has expanded to assessments for transition age students, training for Nebraska VR staff, and increasing employer awareness of assistive technology.



### *Celebrating Return to Work!*



Left to right: Melissa Soulliere, ATP Technology Specialist, Doreen, and Crissie Winings, Nebraska VR Specialist/ Counseling

When Doreen from O'Neill was ready to return to work, Crissie Winings, Nebraska VR, referred her to ATP. Doreen experiences a hearing impairment and needed some adaptations to communicate with her boss and other employees at the nursing home housekeeping department.

At home Doreen could not hear the alarm clock. She was concerned she would not be ready for work on time and did not want to miss important phone calls from her family and employer. ATP Technology Specialist Melissa Soulliere met with Doreen to explore equipment options. Two solutions were identified that are making success on the job possible.

A pulsating alarm with a flashing backlight notifies Doreen when her alarm clock or phone are ringing. A smart watch, compatible with her cell phone, vibrates when she has a call or text message, making it possible for her to communicate with her boss via text messaging.

## RYSE (Retain Your Skilled Employee) Results

Workers with temporary injuries and those with age-related changes find themselves struggling to remain at their job. Retaining Your Skilled Employee (RYSE) helps employees continue to work by providing equipment demonstrations/loans, and information. More than 100 equipment demonstrations included solutions for computers, daily living, seating, and hearing in 2014.

★ A referral for a temporary employee in Omaha was received from state personnel after receiving a request for an ergonomic assessment from a physician. RYSE arranged for a loan of a phone and headset to help them be successful at work. The employee plans to work with Nebraska VR in the future to explore a permanent position.



### *Celebrating Employers!*



Visit ATP's YouTube page for a short video on RYSE.

★ Another state employee experienced difficulty writing after returning to work after a series of mini strokes. A 30 day trial of Grammarly (a proofreading software program that checks punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc.) was recommended.

★ A bank employee returning to work experimented with four keyboards and borrowed two to use at their office. The bank purchased the keyboard that met the needs of their employee.

Corinne Holtz, Resource Coordinator demonstrated equipment during an open house for the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. The event was co-hosted with Nebraska VR.

## **M o r e   S u c c e s s !**

### Training

More than 3,450 individuals attended training (in addition to those conducted by the ATP education staff). Individuals attending were evenly divided, half from metro communities and half from non-metro communities across the state.

### Information & Assistance

ATP responded to more than 4,000 requests from consumers, their families, and professionals. Information was provided on funding, equipment, housing, independent living, education, and employment.

### Public Awareness Activities

Awareness is an everyday occurrence. Social media (Facebook, Twitter) electronic newsletters, conferences, and print materials reached more 200,000 individuals.

### *Celebrating Outside!*



ATP set up outdoors at the annual Lincoln Streets Alive, a festival promoting active living.

## E d u c a t i o n

In 1996, the goal of the NEAT (Nebraska Educational Assistive Technology) Center was to “strengthen children’s access to appropriate assistive technologies for learning and life”. Those initial ties have become an integral part of the partnership and today ATP Education services continue to meet the diverse technology needs for success in the classroom.

The Education Technology Specialists provide services to students of all ages. By maintaining a working relationship with the staff of the early development network they provide technical assistance on ideas and devices that would benefit children from birth to three years of age.

Students ages three to twenty one benefit from numerous services including consultations, demonstrations, and equipment loans. The specialists also assist in planning of the annual Youth First Transition Conferences and provide training and presentations.

The services made an impact outside the classroom this year by assisting a student who was being home schooled. ATP staff worked with the student and his mother on some suggestions to assist him at home and to help him achieve his goal of returning to the classroom.



1998:  
The NEAT (Nebraska Educational Assistive Technology) Center staff traveled 34,365 miles to schools providing information to students and educators  
2014:  
33 open-ended (long term equipment loans) met the needs of students in the classroom and at home

| ATP Education Services  | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | Total  |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| <b>Professional Development and Training</b><br>Large and small groups benefit from events designed to increase knowledge and skills of parents, educators, and professionals.  |           |           |           |        |
| Events  | 179       | 286       | 235       | 700    |
| Number attended   | 1,473     | 7,000     | 2,705     | 11,178 |
| <b>Consultations</b><br>Technology Specialists respond to requests and help identify student specific appropriate assistive technology solutions  | 514       | 601       | 608       | 1,723  |
| <b>Demonstrations</b><br>A demonstration is a sampling that compares the features and benefits of a particular device or category for a student or small group.   | 236       | 282       | 250       | 768    |
| <b>Equipment Loans</b><br>Equipment loans are another way to sample equipment to help in the decision making process. A loan can also fill a gap while waiting for funding or repair, and can be an accommodation. The cost savings is the purchase price saved by the schools. | 635       | 686       | 1,114     | 2435   |
| <b>Awareness Events</b><br>Presentations and exhibits at conferences designed to reach a large audience.  | 277       | 362       | 323       | 962    |



To ensure access for public schools, ATP provides technical assistance to the Nebraska Department of Education Special Education Office. A program coordinator met with 100 school administrators and other staff to identify modifications and reviews plans for compliance with building access under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

building. Automatic door openers were installed at the main exterior entry, the secure visitor door to the office, and on the door from the office to the main hallway. Exterior and interior windows aid visual security and accessible counters benefit everyone.

### Technical Assistance to Schools

In the summer of 2014, the Milford school district created an ADA accessible entrance at the same time they were addressing security systems, fire safety, sprinkler updates, lighting, HVAC improvements, and a remodel of the main entrance and principal's front office area. The work occurred during the summer of 2014 before the new school calendar year started. Before modifications, the entrance was not accessible because of a step and it was located at one end of the building. Everyone now has a direct accessible route in and out of the



 *Celebrating Access for All!*



### 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Transition Conferences

During one day workshops held at Scottsbluff, Kearney, Norfolk, Omaha, and Lincoln, more than a thousand students, parents, and educators explored post high school education and employment. Students learned skills to help them as they transition from high school to work and school. While meeting other students, attendees learned how to become an advocate, researched services, and experienced technology during sessions led by ATP Education Specialists.

### Nebraska ChildFind

Nebraska ChildFind operates a statewide toll free information and referral phone line. ChildFind responded to 360 calls from parents, school personnel, physicians, and service providers on child development and special education for children from birth (or date of diagnosis) to age 21. ChildFind also helps parents access information on rights and resources to help them advocate for an appropriate education for their child.

ChildFind and ATP join forces to promote their services across the state at a variety of events, including medical conferences for school nurses and physicians, and training for educators (Kindergarten Conference, Nebraska Department of Education Administrator Days). A display at Husker Harvest Days in central Nebraska reaches rural residents.

A booth at the Bryan Kid's Club Health and Safety Fair in Lincoln featured the Nebraska ChildFind banner, development wheels, brochures, and some assistive devices provided by the Assistive Technology Partnership. The fair was attended by a 1,000 preschool and elementary age children and parents.

 *Celebrating Outreach*



### **ATP Advisory Council**

Nancy Coffman, Chair, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Lincoln  
Cheryl Anderson, Nebraska Workforce Investment Board, Omaha  
Greg Anderson, Omaha  
John Bahr, Sidney  
Pete Biaggio, Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations, Lincoln  
Bob Doty, Economic Development, Lincoln  
Opal Feeney, Maxwell  
Jaime Galloway, Lincoln  
Chis Gaspari, Kearney  
Terri Holman, Nebraska Planning Council on Disabilities, Lincoln  
David Newburn, Omaha  
Julie Sandin, Lincoln  
Nichole Sullivan, Pierce  
Joni Thomas, Independence Rising, Grand Island  
Christopher Turner, Mid Plains Community College, North Platte  
Judy Voland, Nebraska VR, Grand Island  
Steve Walline, Lincoln  
John C. Wyvill, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Lincoln

### **ATP Education Advisory Council**

Pete Biaggio, Nebraska Department of Education, Special Populations, Lincoln  
Ann Brodin, United Cerebral Palsy of Nebraska, Omaha  
Kim Cooper, North Platte Public Schools, North Platte  
Teresa Ferg, ESU 2, Fremont  
Jen Miller, PTI Nebraska: Parent Training and Information, Omaha  
Shelley German, Hastings Public Schools, Hastings  
John Hanson, ESU 15, Trenton  
Tanya Hilligoss, Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, Nebraska City  
Jera Hinkle, Early Development Network, Kearney  
Mark Mason, Nebraska VR, Lincoln  
Donna Montgomery, University of Nebraska, Kearney  
Scott Plummer, Gordon-Rushville Public Schools, Rushville  
Lisa Pospishal, Norfolk Public Schools, Norfolk  
Michele Rayburn, ESU 6, Milford  
Mary Spillane, Bellevue Public Schools Resource Center, Bellevue

### **Offices**

Lincoln 3901 N. 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 5  
Columbus 3100 N. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Kearney 315 W. 60<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300  
Omaha 1313 Farnam on the Mall  
Scottsbluff 505 A Broadway, Suite 500

### **Educational Services Offices**

Cozad 1910 Meridian Avenue  
Ainsworth 207 N. Main Street  
Columbus 2563 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
LaVista, 6949 S. 110<sup>th</sup> Street  
Ogallala 314 W. First Street



**(402) 471-0734, Toll Free (888) 806-6287**

**E-mail: [atp@atp.ne.gov](mailto:atp@atp.ne.gov)**

**[www.atp.ne.gov](http://www.atp.ne.gov)**

**We're on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube**

The contents of this report was developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

It is the policy of the Nebraska Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, marital status, age, national origin, or genetic information in its education programs, administration, policies, employment, or other agency programs.